

ART. XXXII.—*A Treatise on the Pneumatic Aspiration of Morbid Fluids; a Medico-Chirurgical Method of Diagnosis and Treatment of Cysts and Abscesses of the Liver, Strangulated Hernia, Retention of Urine, Pericarditis, Pleurisy, Hydrarthrosis, etc.* By Dr. GEORGES DIEULAFOY, Gold Medallist of the Hospitals of Paris. 8vo. pp. xvi., 394. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1873.

THE first word in Dr. Dieulafoy's book gives the key-note of the whole production: this word is the shortest in the English language; it contains but a single letter; it is "I." A more egotistical work than that of the author we have never had occasion to read. Aspiration, he assures us, is a method entirely French, and was totally unknown until November 2d, 1869, when his first communication was made to the Academy of Medicine. The chief peculiarities of Dr. Dieulafoy's method, and those in which, according to its author, its great originality consists, are, "(1) the use of extremely fine hollow needles; (2) the creation of a previous vacuum." As to the first point, no American surgeon will require to be told that the innocuousness of punctures with very fine tubes was established, and the use of such tubes for the evacuation of morbid fluids recommended, long before Dr. Dieulafoy's epoch, by our fellow-countryman Dr. Bowditch, of Boston, whose name, by the way, does not once appear in Dr. Dieulafoy's work. As regards "the use of extremely fine hollow needles," the difference between aspiration and Dr. Bowditch's mode of performing paracentesis seems to us merely one of degree. The last-named gentleman employs a very fine trocar and canula, while the author of the book now before us uses a delicate canula, without the trocar, the extremity of the canula itself being bevelled and sharp-pointed, like the tube of a hypodermic syringe. The only respect then in which we can acknowledge the justice of Dr. Dieulafoy's claim to originality is in his employment of what he delights in calling the "previous vacuum"—which is, in plain words, that he draws up the piston of his suction pump so as to create a vacuum in its barrel before introducing the canula, instead of first introducing the canula and applying the suction force afterwards. This is certainly an ingenious mode of applying the instrument, and, we are willing to believe, an improvement upon the common method; but, we confess, it seems to us a small matter to be set forth in a book of four hundred pages.

That we may not do the author injustice, we quote his description of the operation of aspiration—a description which is repeated in almost the same words in seven or eight separate parts of the volume. Having made sure that the needle or canula is pervious, by passing through it a silver wire and a jet of water, Dr. Dieulafoy, in dealing, for instance, with a distended bladder, proceeds as follows:—

"The aspirator being ready, that is to say, the previous vacuum being made, the needle is introduced sharply at the spot pointed out. Before the needle has penetrated a centimetre into the tissue, that is, as soon as its opening is no longer in contact with the external air, the stopcock connected with the needle is opened, and the vacuum is thus formed in the needle itself. This needle, carrying the vacuum with it, is slowly, very slowly, pushed in the direction of the bladder, until the urine flowing over the glass index shows that the bladder is pierced. Owing to this proceeding, and having the previous vacuum at our command, we know the precise moment the fluid is reached."

The numerous clinical histories with which the author intersperses his remarks are narrated with unnecessary detail, and thus have the effect of making

his pages monotonous; indeed, diffuseness and repetition are faults which characterize the whole of Dr. Dieulafoy's volume.

What position "pneumatic aspiration" may occupy in the estimation of practical surgeons when the charm of novelty has passed away, we are unable to decide. For ourselves, while we feel that Dr. Dieulafoy has introduced a real improvement in the treatment of one or two affections—pericardial effusion and obstinate retention of urine, for instance—yet we cannot but regard his invention as one of much less importance than he and his friends evidently consider it. Moreover, we do not think that Dr. Dieulafoy will find that his volume will advance the cause of "aspiration" with judicious readers. He would, we think, have done better to present his views of the "previous vacuum," with a short account of what it actually has accomplished—not of what he fondly imagines it may accomplish—in a more condensed and more modest form.

J. A., JR.

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ART. XXXIII.—*Lectures on Dermatology, delivered in the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1871, 1872, 1873. Including Eczema, Scabies, Urticaria, Herpes, Furunculus, Dermato-Syphilis, Elephantiasis, and Lepra.* By ERASMUS WILSON, F.R.S., F.R.C.S., Member of Council, and Professor of Dermatology. 8vo. pp. xi., 295. London: J. & A. Churchill, 1873.

THE chair of dermatology in the Royal College of Surgeons was founded in 1869, and the author of these lectures was selected as its first occupant. During the following year the first course of lectures was delivered, embracing a general summary or synopsis of the subject. These lectures were subsequently published in the *Medical Times and Gazette*, and later in book form. Through the generosity of Mr. Erasmus Wilson, the Royal College of Surgeons has become the possessor of a most extensive and valuable collection of models of skin disease, most of which are duplicates of those in the Saint Louis Hospital Museum, the work of the artist M. Baretta. In number they exceed five hundred, and are without exception very accurate representations of disease. They form the second largest and most valuable collection of the kind in the world. A very large number of duplicates of these same models have already found their way into our country, and are in the possession of Dr. Wigglesworth, of Boston, a gentleman well known for his interest in all that pertains to the science of dermatology.

It was with a view of presenting these models to the profession that Mr. Wilson inaugurated the course of lectures we are considering, and they may be regarded as a demonstration of the collection with remarks, resembling in some respects clinical lectures. The volume before us comprises three courses of lectures, delivered during a period of three years, and embraces but a limited number of the diseases of the skin; so that, if the same amount of time and attention be devoted to the remaining models of the collection, we cannot hope for the completion of the task for some years to come.

With reference to Mr. Wilson's classification of cutaneous diseases, to which our attention is once more invited, the present occasion does not permit us to speak at length. It is, however, in the words of the author, "a clinical classification;" that is, a system based upon his own views of the clinical relationship of the various diseases with but little or no concern for their pathological characteristics. In a word, it is a classification peculiarly original, and the simple and captivating appearance which it at first presents is at once dis-